

The Environmental Responsibility of Two Major Oil Companies in Romania

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Abstract

The present study is a descriptive-analytic investigation and research of social responsibility and its environmental component in the case of two important Romanian companies: OMV Petrom and KMG International (Rompetrol). The aim of the research is to present the way in which two of the most important Romanian oil companies have built up the environmental component of their corporate social responsibility policies, as well as their projects concerning the environment. The selection of the companies was based on their size, as we sought to present major companies that have a high degree of involvement in the field of environmental responsibility. Our approach relies on data featured in the official reports issued by the two companies and also on information that can be found in reports published by audit firms and professional services companies in the field. For each company, we analyzed the components of the environmental responsibility that are established in order to reduce environmental impacts, as well as any projects aimed at increasing the involvement of the general public in protecting nature. From our analysis, we can say that the environmental constituent of the corporate social responsibility policy in the case of Romanian companies is structured in two parts. The first one focuses on internal policies and actions seeking to reduce the environmental impact of a company's activities. The second one consists of policies dealing with the interactions between the company, the external environment and the community where it operates, trying to support its development.

Keywords: Social responsibility, environmental responsibility, OMV Petrom, Rompetrol, Romania

Introduction

The present article is the third part of a series dedicated to social responsibility and its environmental component. In our first article, we made a brief historical analysis of the evolution of social responsibility and its environmental component at an international level, presenting at the same time the organizations and programs involved in the development of the concept and the actions through which it is implemented (Manoiu and Gadiuta, 2016). The second part investigated the way in which some of the most important companies in Romania have built up the environmental component of their social responsibility policies and the projects that they implemented in this area (Manoiu and Gadiuta, 2017). For each company, we took a quick look at the components of its environmental social responsibility policy implemented in order to reduce the environmental impact of its actions, as well as to the projects undertaken to increase the public's involvement in the protection of the environment (Manoiu and Gadiuta, 2017).

The aim of this paper is to perform a descriptive-analytical investigation of environmental responsibility for two of the major oil companies in Romania: OMV Petrom and KMG International (Rompetrol). Our work updates and expands the body of information provided by the two previous articles on the same topic.

The paper focuses on two main issues: 1) the components of the environmental policy of social responsibility undertaken by each of the two companies; 2) the projects implemented in order to involve the general public in the area of environmental protection.

The present analysis was performed using a data base consisting of various official reports of the two companies and also on the basis of information provided by the reports of audit and professional service firms in the oil and gas industry.

Background

The concept of social responsibility in Romania emerged with the increase in the number and strength of multinational companies operating in the country. In the organizational culture of these foreign businesses, the notion of social responsibility had already taken shape and as the Romanian branches of multinationals appeared and expanded, the policies of social responsibility began to be implemented locally (Manoiu and Gadiuta, 2017).

In the first stage, major companies started their involvement by sponsoring various projects and by carrying out philanthropic actions. At this early moment, it was not yet possible to speak of a conscious social responsibility policy, but these actions signaled their opening to various social projects (Manoiu and Gadiuta, 2017).

This financial involvement received a legislative support with the appearance of a law on sponsorship. The first such regulation entered into force in 1994 (Law no. 32/1994) and was subsequently amended. In its current form, a portion of the taxes that a company pays can be redirected in the form of donations and sponsorships for social causes (Manoiu and Gadiuta, 2017).

According to the study titled “How do NGOs and SMEs (small and medium enterprises) see the sponsorship law?” issued in 2015 by HOSPICE Casa Sperantei, the Association for Community Relations and EY Romania (HOSPICE, 2015), and by corroborating this study with data submitted by companies to the National Fiscal Administration Agency (ANAF), the total amount of tax money that was redirected by businesses towards projects in the non-profit area through donations and sponsorships in 2014 was approximately 1.412.412.395 lei, or 318 million euros (Ernst & Young, 2014; HOSPICE, 2015).

Nevertheless, only 16% of companies (30.651) chose to make sponsorships, totaling 523 million lei, or approximately 22% of the maximum potential. The number of companies that have resorted to these financing mechanisms has increased over time, from 29.317 (13%) in 2011 to 30.651 (16%) in 2013 (Ernst & Young, 2014).

This data shows us that there is still a massive financial potential which can be used by companies in the area of social responsibility without incurring additional costs.

Looking back as far as 2004, with the first Corporate Social Responsibility report in Romania which was issued by Orange (Orange Romania 2003 SR Report), we arrive in 2013 at a total of 69 CSR reports belonging to various companies (KPMG 2013 Survey of Corporate Responsibility Reporting).

After January 1st 2017, EU Directive no. 2014/95/EU requires companies with more than 500 employees or those that are considered to be of public interest, including in Romania, to elaborate and publish impact reports on their activities. According to the CSR Agency (CSR Report website, 2015; CSR Agency website, 2016), a consultancy firm in the areas of sustainability and CSR, at least 722 local companies (which have more than 500 employees) will have to publish such reports.

At the same time, in the year 2006, the first Romanian on-line portal dedicated to providing information about CSR was launched: www.responsabilitatesocială.ro (Social Responsibility website). It represents a source of knowledge on the principles of social responsibility. The portal was launched by the founded “Selenis” Agency, in partnership with JTI Romania.

All these actions illustrate a multifaceted development of the social responsibility concept in Romania.

2015 witnessed the creation of the Global Compact Network Romania, part of the United Nations Global Compact, the largest social responsibility project to date. The official launch took place on May 15, 2015 (Global Compact Network Romania website). Until now, 27 companies have joined the national Global Compact Network (Global Compact Network Romania website).

The Environmental Responsibility of Two Major Romanian Oil Companies – Results and Discussions

In this chapter, we shall present the strategy chosen by the two major Romanian oil and gas companies to build up the environmental aspects of their social responsibility policies, as well as the most important projects that they have undertaken in this area.

The choice of companies was based on their size (we sought to take into account the largest such entities) and the degree of their social engagement, as we tried to investigate companies that are deeply involved in society.

For each of the two companies, we analyzed the environmental components of their social responsibility policies that are implemented in order to decrease the impact of economic activities on the environment and also the projects which aim to involve the general public in the protection of nature.

OMV Petrom

OMV Petrom is the largest integrated oil and gas company in South-Eastern Europe, with activities in the fields of exploration, extraction and production, refining and petrochemicals, natural gas, marketing and energy generation (OMV Petrom website). In 2013, the company had a turnover of 24.185.000.000 lei and 19.619 employees (OMV Petrom website).

By its size and the scope of its activities, the actions of OMV Petrom have a significant impact on the natural environment.

OMV Petrom is one of the most deeply involved companies in the area of CSR, being the first Romanian enterprise that in 2011 committed itself to the principles of the UN Global Compact Network.

In 2012, OMV Petrom released its first sustainability report, covering the previous year (2011). This was followed by subsequent reports covering the years 2012, 2013 and 2014 (OMV Petrom 2011-2014 Sustainability Reports).

The 2013 report is the most recent one covering OMV Petrom's national actions, as the 2014 document deals with its international activities.

The OMV Petrom policy is based on an original concept: “Resourcefulness” (Fig.1). It was launched in 2011 and places sustainability at the heart of the company’s activities. The 2013 report highlights that “our approach is to implement initiatives in areas such as environmental management, new energy sources, education and development, security, diversity, business ethics, human rights, the involvement of stakeholders and communities in a single holistic strategy.” (OMV Petrom 2013 Sustainability Report).



Figure 1. The Structure of OMV Petrom Concept of Resourcefulness
(Source: OMV Petrom 2013 Sustainability Report)

The environmental component of OMV Petrom is based on three principles:

Eco-efficiency

Through this concept, OMV Petrom attempts to institute the best available practices in the management of environmental issues, with a focus on carbon emissions, water management and energy efficiency. As the company develops, it uses increasing amounts of energy, which in turn makes energy efficiency ever more important for supporting future growth.

In 2013, the company set itself the target of reducing the carbon intensity of its operational assets by 2% compared with 2012. This goal was exceeded, as OMV Petrom managed a reduction of 3.4% (OMV Petrom website; OMV Petrom 2013 Sustainability Report).

Also in 2013, OMV Petrom SA and all the activities of OMV Petrom Gas SRL received an ISO 50001 certification for their supply, marketing and trade activities. This certification ensures that the goals of energy use, performance monitoring and improving efficiency are all met in the field of energy (OMV Petrom website; OMV Petrom 2013 Sustainability Report).

Approximately 11 million EUR have been invested in eight Gas to Power and Combined Heat and Power Cogeneration projects, achieving a reduction of energy consumption and, at the same time, a decrease of CO₂ emissions of 13.000 tons (OMV Petrom website; OMV Petrom 2011-2014 Sustainability Reports).

The efficient use of water was another focus of the company's efforts in 2013. OMV Petrom invested in cutting edge water treatment plants and the waste water treatment station at the Petrobrazi oil refinery was modernized. These actions offered positive results, as the company experienced an 8% reduction in the total water consumption compared to 2012, adding up to an amount of 24.2 million cubic meters. In 2013, 11.29 million cubic meters of waste water were adequately treated (OMV Petrom website; OMV Petrom 2013 Sustainability Report).

The exploration and production activities of OMV Petrom involve massive amounts of water that are used in oil and gas extraction, which amounted to 36.4 million cubic meters in 2013. More than 96% of the water generated through various activities was re-injected into the oil and gas deposits after undergoing a treatment process. The remaining water was cleaned and evacuated in surface water courses, in accordance with the environmental authorizations (OMV Petrom website; OMV Petrom 2013 Sustainability Report).

Over the course of 2013, all the operational sites of OMV Petrom were included in waste prevention and reduction plans. The company performed waste management audits and planned actions aimed at improving performance on all operational levels. The total amount of waste generated in 2013 declined by 20% compared to 2012. This is due primarily to a reduction in demolition activities and to the completion of a biological rehabilitation program targeting the silt settling tanks of the Arpechim refinery. Around 50% of the total waste resulting from OMV Petrom's activities has been recycled (OMV Petrom website; OMV Petrom 2011-2014 Sustainability Reports).

Eco-innovation

This concept refers to the research activities that seek to identify and apply new technologies that are as environmentally friendly as possible. At the same time, the company investigates alternative energy sources that could replace traditional fossil fuels in the future.

Education for development

OMV Petrom encourages and promotes educational projects for developing skills and abilities for both its employees and stakeholders. In the communities where the company is active, education is supported through projects in the areas of environmental protection, energy and entrepreneurship.

For its employees, there are continuous training programs and internal communication activities that ensure the spread of the best available practices in the area of environmental management. The focus of these communications in 2013 was water resource management.

Thus, OMV Petrom started a campaign throughout the entire group, titled “Efficiency in the use of water: Show that you care!” More than 2.700 employees were involved through various communication channels and a network of 14 ambassadors of the program was set up, along with an idea contest that took place during a series of workshops and meetings. Out of 177 ideas received, 62 were applied by the company (OMV Petrom website).

The three winning ideas were: “Measures for recovering energy from steam in the Exploration and Production Division”, “Reducing water losses in the Refining and Marketing Division (Cristian village Oil Storage Facility)”, “Reducing water losses at the cooling towers of the Gas and Energy Division (Petrom City power plant)” (OMV Petrom website).

Another important aspect of the environmental responsibility policy is the prevention of environmental accidents.

A wide range of actions with the goal of preventing or reducing the environmental impact of hydrocarbon leaks are being implemented. The company has created a map of hydrocarbon leaks risk, which provides detailed information on the hazard and potential impact of a leak at specific locations along the pipelines. 60% of OMV Petrom’s exploration and production assets are included on this risks map, which presents the entire network of pipelines and highlights any “critical points” where the threat of a leakage is at its highest. This knowledge is then used to enforce preventive action plans and to prepare effective measures in case of a spill (OMV Petrom website; OMV Petrom 2011-2014 Sustainability Reports).

In 2013, the company performed risk assessments for 4.400 pipelines and 12.000 static pieces of equipment. More than 600 installations have been classified according to their degree of risk, including storage tank parks and compression stations (OMV Petrom website; OMV Petrom 2013 Sustainability Report).

With the help of a loan from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), OMV Petrom carried out a reconstruction and rehabilitation project for the insulation of important pipelines, which will result in a more energy-efficient hydrocarbon transport system with a lower

risk of experiencing damaging leaks. The program includes several projects that target small and medium sized pipelines which are managed at a local level (OMV Petrom website; OMV Petrom 2011-2014 Sustainability Reports).

Another policy that has been undertaken by the OMV Petrom group is the attempt to create and distribute products that have a lower environmental impact. As such, the gasoline and diesel fuels produced at the Petrobrazi refinery are sulfur-free (a content of sulfur of less than 10 ppm) (OMV Petrom website; OMV Petrom 2011-2014 Sustainability Reports).

Once more in 2013, the company began to produce compressed natural gas (CNG), which generates 20% less CO₂, 80% less CO and virtually no particle emissions compared to other fuels. Liquid petroleum gas (LPG) and CNG have been offered at 236 of the 785 gas stations operated by OMV Petrom, covering around 30% of the company's gas stations (OMV Petrom website; OMV Petrom 2013 Sustainability Report).

The “Țara lui Andrei” Program (Andrei’s Country Program)

Not limiting itself to implementing environmental responsibility policies targeting its own activities, OMV Petrom has also created projects that involve the communities where it operates and the general public. Beginning with 2009, such projects have been consolidated in a platform called “Țara lui Andrei” (Andrei’s Country).

In 2013, this platform received the „Best on-line community in Europe Award” from Digital Communication Awards (OMV Petrom website).

The actions that make up this social responsibility platform can be split into two categories:

- Projects undertaken by OMV Petrom itself in partnership with various NGOs.
- Projects funded by OMV Petrom after annual project competitions.

One of the most important projects organized by the ”Țara lui Andrei” platform involves tree plantings which take place in an organized manner, with the goal of combating various problems affecting local communities, such as landslides, desertification or blizzards during winter. These events bring together as volunteers company employees and people from the benefiting communities.

Other actions involve both employees that volunteer to participate and members of the local communities that are the focus of these rehabilitation actions. For example, in 2013, there were two ecological restoration actions in rural areas, and, as a result, approximately 3.200 kilograms of rubbish and waste were collected (OMV Petrom 2013 Community Involvement Report).

In 2014, the total budget for all community social responsibility actions organized by OMV Petrom was 3.8 million euros, the highest among Romanian companies (OMV Petrom 2014 Community Involvement Report).

KMG International (Rompetrol)

Rompetrol is the best-known brand of KMG International, under which the company runs its fuel production and distribution operations in Romania, the Republic of Moldova, Bulgaria, Georgia and France. In 2013, the company had a turnover of 11.748.666.980 lei and employed more than 7300 people (Rompetrol website).

KMG International (Rompetrol) is a founding member of the Global Compact Network in Romania, and has thus agreed to the principles of social responsibility promoted by the program.

Its first and so far only social responsibility report was published on August 18, 2015. It presents the company's activities in 2013 and 2014 and was elaborated using the G4 Sustainability Reporting Standards established by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI).

The main environmental goal of KMG is “to develop its activities in full compliance with the environmental legislation of each country where the Group operates, applying the general principles of environmental protection through practices aimed at achieving sustainability and conserving natural resources” (KMG International 2013-2014 International Sustainability Report).

In the 2008 – 2015 interval, KMG allocated 600.000.000 US dollars for environmental management activities (KMG International 2013-2014 International Sustainability Report).

In order to reach this objective, KMG International has developed a strategy that focuses on several areas of interest, which are all closely related to the activities and operations of the group. The main avenues of these actions are (KMG International 2013-2014 International Sustainability Report):

- Aligning its activities and operations with national and international regulations in the field of environmental protection;
- Minimizing environmental incidents;
- Minimizing the consumption of natural resources;
- Reducing the total volume of waste generated, especially with regards to dangerous waste;
- Optimizing the operations and technologies in order to improve energy efficiency and decrease various polluting emissions, particularly those of greenhouse gases;
- Improving the certified environmental management system (ISO 14001) that is implemented by each entity of the group;

- The continuous training of the employees;
- Ensuring an excellent communication both within the Group and in the relationship with various stakeholders.

In 2013, the Petromidia refinery successfully completed a transition period for aligning its production facilities with existing European environmental regulations (Rompetrol website; KMG International 2013-2014 International Sustainability Report). The same year, Petromidia received a new integrated environmental authorization from the Constanta County Environmental Protection Agency, which has a 10 year period of validity (Rompetrol website; KMG International 2013-2014 International Sustainability Report). This serves as recognition of the fact that the production installations of the Petromidia platform operate at the highest standards of performance and environmental protection. Also, the new authorization sets the conditions and parameters that have to be met by the company (levels of atmospheric emissions, water and soil quality, waste management actions).

In 2014, the authorizations for greenhouse gas emissions were revised for Rompetrol Refining (RRC) Petromidia (the refining and petrochemical units) and the company received allocations for the new installations. The completion of the investment program resulted in a higher degree of energy efficiency for the Petromidia refinery, which now produces only Euro 5 fuels (Rompetrol website; KMG International 2013-2014 International Sustainability Report).

Furthermore, KMG International carried out a number of rehabilitation projects (Rompetrol website; KMG International 2013-2014 International Sustainability Report):

- “Rehabilitating and development of the terrain” where the acid tar and oil residue sumps of the Rompetrol Rafinare – Vega Ploiesti refinery are located.
- “Emptying Pit no. 3” of the Petromidia refinery, an action that continued in 2014.

Also in 2014, Rompetrol completed the project of “Installing a particle emission reduction system at the catalytic cracking installation – Electrostatic precipitator”, thus complying with Decision no. 379/05.06.2012 of the Constanta Environmental Protection Agency (Rompetrol website; KMG International 2013-2014 International Sustainability Report). The goal of the project was to equip the above-mentioned installation with a system for removing dust generated by the catalyst of the burned gases. The solution that was identified and applied consisted in installing an electrostatic filter on the gas pipes, in order to catch solid particles and prevent them from reaching the atmosphere, thus completing an investment with a positive effect on nature.

2014 also saw the granting of a water management authorization for the Petromidia refinery (with a validity period of 2 years) and for the Vega refinery (with a one year validity period) (Rompetro website; KMG International 2013-2014 International Sustainability Report).

All the fuels that are sold by Rompetrol Refineries are certified by the Romanian Automobile Registry, and the company has maintained its certifications for management quality, environmental protection and health and safety in 2013 and 2014 (Rompetro website; KMG International 2013-2014 International Sustainability Report). Another significant aspect for an oil and gas company is the risk of accidents and the manner in which hazardous situations are managed. The refineries belonging to the KMG International group have operated at maximum capacity in 2015, without any accidental or planned shutdown (for a total of 365 days), processing an average of 13.800 tons of raw material per day. The total amount of processed raw materials in 2013 reached 240.553 tons, out of which 238.694 tons at Petromidia and 1.859 tons at facilities that do not belong to the group (Rompetro website; KMG International 2013-2014 International Sustainability Report).

In 2014, the volume of processed raw materials rose to 254.410 tons. In 2013, 0.4% of the above-mentioned volume (or 16.915 tons) came from recycled raw materials (oil muds) that were used in the primary production and in fueling various services required by the company. In 2014, for the first 10 months of the year, the company used 15.975 tons of recycled oil muds, representing once again 0.4% of its total volume of raw materials (Rompetro website; KMG International 2013-2014 International Sustainability Report).

According to its policies, the operations of each company belonging to KMG International must apply an efficient management of energy in their business plans and must evaluate, prioritize and implement technologies and systems that improve the efficiency of energy consumption.

As a result of all these continuous efforts, the production activity has become more energy efficient over the past years.

The structure of energy consumption was also impacted by the investments and upgrades carried out at the Petromidia refinery. Nevertheless, there is still room for improvement, mostly by optimizing the consumption of electricity and heating (gas and steam). Starting with 2012, there was a positive evolution of the energy indicators, following the investment package and the various measures and projects targeting energy efficiency at Petromidia. The reduction in operational costs, which was accompanied by an increase in the mechanical and operational availability of the installations, allowed a significant improvement of the Energy Intensity indicator of the Petromidia refinery, which reached its best value yet

(Rompetrol website; KMG International 2013-2014 International Sustainability Report). The Energy Intensity indicator of the Vega refinery on the other hand experienced a negative evolution starting from 2012, explained by the expansion of the hexane production facility and a decrease in the flow of products (Rompetrol website; KMG International 2013-2014 International Sustainability Report). However, following the implementation of new projects and measures meant to make energy consumption more efficient at the Vega refinery, the indicator has begun a positive evolution after 2014.

Due to the permanent improvement of production and management processes and the significant investments made in new technologies, KMG International has successfully aligned itself to the national and European environmental requirements in the areas of atmospheric sulfur and nitrogen oxides emissions. In regard to climate change, KMG International fully complies with EU regulations. In 2013, sulfur dioxide emissions were cut by 90.63%. Greenhouse gas emissions created by the group's activities were also within the parameters set for 2013 (Rompetrol website; KMG International 2013-2014 International Sustainability Report).

Another goal of KMG International is to maintain energy and natural resources consumption under control, and, as a result, through its environmental policy, the group pledges to reduce resource consumption by using them in an efficient manner (KMG International 2013-2014 International Sustainability Report).

Going beyond the social responsibility policies by which KMG International strives to reduce the impact that its activities have on nature, the company has also launched a program for financing social responsibility projects that seek to develop communities.

The national program "Together for Everyone", launched in 2009, aims to involve local communities in initiating, sustaining and implementing projects in the areas of healthcare and environmental protection (Rompetrol website, "Together for Everyone" project; "Together for Everyone" project website).

As of 2015, 1.5 million dollars' worth of financing has been offered, which helped support 101 development projects in communities across Romania and the Republic of Moldova. Funds were distributed evenly between healthcare and the environment (Rompetrol website, "Together for Everyone" project; "Together for Everyone" project website).

The main goals of these environmental projects were: ecological restoration actions, preserving and improving environmental conditions at local scale, waste management systems, the rehabilitation and enhancing of degraded lands and other innovative projects with environmental applications.

Conclusion

Seen from an environmental perspective, the concept of corporate social responsibility is becoming ever more important, as the pressures exerted on nature by economic activities increase. In Romania, the change brought about by the 1989 Revolution was accompanied by a period of economic and social opening towards the international trends and ideas. As the social and economic interactions of Romania with the outside world increased, the concept of corporate social responsibility emerged as an important notion.

Following our analysis of the two leading oil and gas companies of Romania, OMV Petrom and KMG International (Rompetrol), we can draw a number of conclusions concerning the common features of the environmental component of their corporate social responsibility policies. The first one is the fact that the environmental CSR policies have a two-part structure. The first elements deal with internal policies and actions for reducing the environmental impact of the economic activities. The second part consists of those policies implemented by the companies for managing their external relationships with the communities where they operate and whose development they try to support.

The activities of these two major companies have a significant impact on the environment, but this is balanced by a strong awareness of this impact among the leaders of the two companies and a firm commitment towards environmental policies and actions. Both companies have issued sustainability reports and have focused their efforts on projects dealing with issues such as air and water pollution, improving waste management and energy efficiency. OMV Petrom and KMG International (Rompetrol) are some of the most active Romanian companies in the CSR sphere. They support research projects and promote educational initiatives that seek to protect nature and involve local communities.

CSR is not a fad or a trend, but a conscious and rational behavior that brings benefits not just to companies but also to local communities and, of course, to the environment.

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